



Washington State Department of Agriculture  
2001 Gypsy Moth Program  
**Press Release**

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**WSDA Proposes to Treat 29 Acres in Lewis County**  
**to Combat Gypsy Moth Caterpillars**

OLYMPIA --The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) announced today a proposal to treat 29 acres in southwest Lewis County with a biological insecticide next spring to combat an infestation of European Gypsy Moth. The 29-acre site is located in Vader about seven miles south of Winlock.

The Gypsy Moth is one of America's worst forest pest insects, feeding on the foliage of more than 500 different species of trees and shrubs and causing millions of dollars of economic and environmental damage.

If the Gypsy Moth were to become permanently established in Washington State, it would have a devastating impact on our agriculture and timber industries.

The biological insecticide proposed for use in Vader is *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki* (*Btk*). It is a very selective and effective insecticide that has been approved for use on numerous food and fiber crops by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). *Btk* is a naturally occurring bacterium found in the soil and is commonly used by organic farmers. It has a proven safety record with people, pets, livestock, birds, fish, and other insects such as bees.

Before deciding to proceed with the proposed treatment, WSDA will conduct a public outreach program and prepare two environmental documents for public review and comment.

The public outreach program includes articles in the local media; letters to residents, businesses, and elected officials; appearances before community groups; a community open house to be held in early February; and a toll-free Gypsy Moth Hotline (1-800-443-6684) for citizens to call to obtain answers to questions.

The two documents that will be prepared for public review and comment are a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental checklist and a draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental assessment. Any comments submitted by residents in response to either of the two documents will be carefully reviewed by WSDA before a decision to proceed with the treatment is made.

Three treatments of *Btk* have been proposed for the Vader site. The proposed treatments will begin in late April or early May, depending on leaf development and when the Gypsy Moth caterpillars hatch, and will occur 7-to-14 days apart. The insecticide would be applied using ground equipment.

The Gypsy Moth arrived in the U.S. from France in 1869. It is now permanently established in 17 Northeast and Midwest states. The Gypsy Moth is not permanently established in Washington State. It has been detected here every year since 1977 but all past infestations have been eliminated by the WSDA. "We want that record to continue," said entomologist Chad Phillips, project coordinator.

The kinds of host trees preferred by the Gypsy Moth caterpillar include the oak, birch, apple, poplar, alder, cottonwood, hawthorne, and willow.

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In January residents in the 29-acre treatment zone will receive written invitations to attend an open house to be held in early February in Vader. At the open house WSDA representatives will explain details of the proposed treatment and answer questions.

A total of 92 Gypsy Moths were caught in small cardboard traps in Washington State last summer compared to 42 in 1999. Of the 92 moths caught, 76 were caught in the Vader area. "Typically Gypsy Moth are brought into Washington State from infested states on vehicles or outdoor household items," said Phillips.

Anyone with questions on the Gypsy Moth program or proposed treatment in Vader may call the WSDA's toll-free Gypsy Moth Hotline at 1-800-443-6684. Also, community groups that would like a slide-show presentation made on the WSDA's Gypsy Moth program may call the Gypsy Moth Hotline.

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